In The Shadow of Cerebro by brodie-wan

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Summary: Robin steps in for Steve when Dustin needs help repairing the radio tower. They bond. Mentions of Steve, Suzie, the Song, and Starcourt.

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Author note: This was written as a gift exchange over at AO3. The prompt was: 1. A Robin and Dustin scene. They can talk, open up, joke around.

In the Shadow of Cerebro

Robin Buckley stood in the greenest grass on the tallest hill in Hawkins with Dustin Henderson. She was holding an antenna in place as he secured it electrical tape. If he had asked her it should have been duct tape. He would not stop talking about how his conversation wit Suzie had been rudely interrupted when Cerebro threw a shoe, so to speak, by having the antenna come loose and fall off. As he explained, without taking a breath, he was not able to reattach the piece himself. He had called Steve, at work, and was referred to Robin, who was not working.

Robin was happy to step in for her friend; she had been wanting to get to know some of the Family better and this was a perfect opportunity. As the newest member, awkward enough on her own, she wondered how it was going to work. It had been two weeks since Starcourt, two weeks since the boy next to her had been 'forced' to sing a pet song for his long distance 'girlfriend' in order to get a crucial piece of information required to literally save the world. It all sounded so dramatic, because it WAS pretty damn dramatic. She was in the back of a piece of POS car, with Dingus and others, as a giant flesh absorbing monster was chasing them. She had seen this movie and it always ended badly for the intended victims. Had it not been called back, for a more important prize, she might just be rolling gelatinous gore on the creature's skinny ass. Thankfully, she wasn't. However, the whole monster from another dimension was not something she was handling particularly well.

"Are you almost done," Robin asked, annoyed. "My arm is getting tired."

"Yeah," Dustin replied, distractedly. "Can you lift it just another couple of centimeters higher?"

"Just a little higher," Robin said in exasperation. "A little higher."

Dustin's eyes were pulled away from the tape and the antenna as he regarded Robin with skeptical awe."Tell me you weren't just quoting *Return of the Jedi*."

Robin rolled her eyes and her head before locking on to Dustin. "I was not quoting *Return of the Jedi*. I would never quote a scene where the near blind Han Solo was about to shoot a tentacle of the Great Sarlaac which had attached itself to Lando Calrissian's leg. Never. Ever."

"HOLY SPIT!" the boy exclaimed, dropping the tape and his hold on the antenna which made it unwieldy for Robin who dropped the entire piece to the ground. Unfazed by their work falling down, Dustin eyed Robin closely.

"What?" she said, apathetically, nudging the cumbersome piece of metal toward him with her foot.

"No! Wait! I thought you were blind," Dustin answered as if his fingers hovered over the butts of his six-shooters waiting to draw.

"It's alright. I can see a lot better. Don't move!"

Dustin's grimace melted in to a grin and moved toward Robin, raising his arm for a high five.

"Yeah...no high fives," Robin deadpanned.

Dustin shrugged and plowed ahead in his excitement. "That is so awesome, Robin! Quoting *Star Wars*. Just incredible!"

"I can quote a lot more than that," Robin replied, confidently. "But you're so easy to impress."

"I wouldn't say that was easy," Dustin replied, picking up the antenna. "There are a lot more quotable moments in ROTJ than that one. "We've got to give Han more time!"

"Do we have to go over them?" Robin whined. "I apologize for saying you were easy to impress."

Dustin smiled goofily. "No big deal. I just think it's cool that you

know that stuff. Like Russian. Your super power."

Robin never thought about language skills and puzzle solving as a super power. She had certainly never made use of it working at Scoops Ahoy. Until Starcourt. Not just the job at Starcourt Mall. She had heard some of the Party calling it *The Battle of Starcourt*. But, to her, it was simply Starcourt; the event that forever separated what came before and what came after. It had been horrific. She had feared for her life. She had even tried to conjure an image of Tammy Thompson when the beast was nipping at their heels.

"My super power, huh?" Robin said, disbelievingly.

"Of course!" Dustin assured her, as if it were a given. "We couldn't have done it without you, Robin. You were the lynch pin."

"If you say so," Robin demurred. "I did a lot of running while you, Steve, and Erica put yourselves on the line."

Dustin's mop of light brown curls bounced as he shook his head. "Don't go fishing like that. No matter who you were before, you're one of us now. You broke the code. You determined the threat. We just followed where that lead went. Unfortunately, it lead right back to The Upside Down. You're the brains, Robin!"

Robin watched as the excitable and undeniably resilient middle schooler brought the antenna back to her. He offered it to her like a gift, a peace offering for a rift that didn't exist. She guessed that that is what an offer of friendship looks like. She took the antenna, wordlessly, and walked around the side of he structure. She lifted it into place as he pulled the strips of tape necessary to hold it in place.

Again, she thought about Starcourt; about sitting in Byers' car, next to Steve, the pounding of the monster's appendages getting ever closer. She was listening, intently, to Dustin's desperate attempt to reach Suzie for a mathematical equation which was the 'pass go' for the next level of danger ahead. When he finally reached her, there was no time to marvel at her actual existence. The World was at stake. But then Suzie, supposedly cute little Suzie, Dustin's paramour, had decided to get obstinate about giving him the equation. Whatever it was, she wanted to hear it. He would have to make it up to her right

then. The rest is history, but Robin had been waiting over a week to ask the kid about it.

"What the hell with that song, Doofus?" she asked, breaking he silence.

"Steve didn't tell you?" Dustin answered with a question of his own.

"Steve doesn't tell me everything. Well, almost everything. There are some things he leaves me to figure out on my own. As you said, I'm part of the family now. Not just Steve's tag along."

"Ask Steve," Dustin deflected, calmly, placing the last piece of tape.

Robin huffed as she shook her head in amazement. "You two are peas in a freaking pod, Tweedle-Dingus and Tweedle-Doofus. I did ask him and he said to ask you. He said it was your story to tell."

Dustin removed his hands from Cerebro's skeleton and motioned for Robin to do the same. He nodded in admiration at his handiwork. He turned to Robin smiling amiably.

"I've caught enough **** about that song to last a lifetime. I'm still kind of pissed about it. We are a family for sure which means we get on each others' nerves. They want to poke some fun to help grieve, to lighten mood of what we've been through? Okay. I can take it. But they don't know the true story. They've been asking, but I've kept this big mouth shut. We'll get through it. I won't be pissed forever. Ask me in a week. If you still care."

There was not quick retort to what Dustin had just said. No levity for his somber statement. She had not wanted to give him a high five and he had been okay with that. But now she wanted to hug the little bastard. She opened her arms, which was so strange for her, and stepped toward him. He rushed into her arms, almost bowling her over. She brought her arms tentatively around him and patted his back softly. It was a short hug and when Dustin stepped back and met her eyes, the tears she expected to be in his eyes were nowhere to be found.

"Thanks," was his only response.

"Are we ready to go?" she asked.

He grabbed a few items and nodded.

As the two new friends walked down the tallest hill in Hawkins, with streaks of golden sunshine at their backs, Robin said:

"One week."

A smile tugged at the edges of Dustin's mouth as he continued down the hill.